THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) Except Tamil Nadu, no State has independent legislation on urban land ceiling. Both the Central Act and the Tamil Nadu Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, 1978 had similar objectives. The Central Act now stands repleaded.

(b) and (c) No market rates of land are fixed under Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, 1976, which now stands repealed.

Amendments to Patents Law

*100. SHRI AKHILESH DAS:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what was the precise commitment to World Trade Organisation with regard to amendments to the Patents Law; and

(b) what specific steps are contemplated to prevent encroachments in areas, patently like Neem, Turmeric, Basmati Rice etc?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) As per the provisions of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement, which is a part of Agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation (WTO), during the transition period, amendments are required to be made in 3 stages i.e. by 1 January, 1995, 1 January, 2000 and 1 January, 2005.

By 1st January, 1995, means were to be established to receive product patent application and to provide exclusive marketing rights, on fulfilment of certain conditions, in the fields of pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals. By 1 January, 2000 India is required to increase the term of patent protection to 20 years, reverse of burden of proof in process patents, etc. By 1 January, 2005 products patent protection has to be extended to areas of technologies not protected so far, namely, food medicines and chemical products.

(b) Patents are granted by respective Gopvernments under their patent laws and right thereunder are restricted to the territorial boundry of the country. Whenever information is received about patents being taken on certain products which are not considered patentable, steps are taken to assess whether grant of patent can be challenged.

Trade with Russia

621. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have entered into a long term trade agreement during the recent visit of the Prime Minister of erstwhile Soviet Union;

(b) if so, what are its salient features and the proposed quantum of increase in trade between the two countries;

(c) whether Government would ensure that such an agreement does not give unprecedented rise in the cost of leather and leather products in domestic market which had been scarce earlier because of exports to Soviet Union; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) A Joint Document on Development of Trade, Economic, Industrial, Financial, Scientific and Technological Cooperation was signed. The validity of the Joint Document is upto 2010. As per the Joint Document, the sides consider that there is a potential for increasing the volume of bilateral trade turnover to two times by 2000 and four times by 2005. The two sides agreed to take necessary steps to diversify the basket of bilateral trade by encouraging trade in non-tradi-

tional goods, facilitating consignment exports under the debt repayment route and having long term trading arrangements in agreed commodities.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Ban on Export of Molecules

622. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to ban on export of Molecules under Test, the domestic Pharmaceutical Companies who have received export order over Rs. 300 crores for supplying Sildenafil Citrate, are facing lot of difficulties in fulfilling their commitments with the importers;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering lifting of ban on export of these Molecules;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERECE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HAGDE): (a) There is no ban under the Export and Import Policy on the export of Molecules under Test and therefore export of Sildenafil Citrate is also not banned. However, the export orders of Sildenafil Citrate are held up because of suspension of issue of 'No Objection Certificate' by the Drug Controller General of India in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare pending receipt of clarification of prevalent regulations to manufacture this drug for export purposes.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Decline in Price of Rubber

623. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the price of natural rubber has declined and the farmers are facing serious crisis;

(b) if so, the details of decline in price and the steps taken to maintain remunerative price;

(c) whether Government have received any representations in this connection and if so, the details of the request;

(d) whether Government have directed the STC to procure rubber; and

(e) if so, the details of procurement made during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) Yes, Sir. The price of natural rubber (RSS-4) which was around Rs. 30 per kg. in July, 1994, touched more than Rs. 60 per kg. in June, 1995. However, the price of NR started declining steadily since then and after November, 1996 the decline has been sharp. The price of Natural Rubber on 23.2.99 was Rs. 2850 per quintal.

The Govt. of India, on receiving representations from several Members of Parliament as also from Govt. of Kerala, requesting for Government intervention to check the declining prices of rubber in the domestic market, had, in August, 1997 and May 1998, directed State Trading Corporation to procure upto 10,000 MT and 20,000 MT of Natural Rubber respectively on Govt. account.

As on 12.2.99, STC has procured 8737 MT of Natural Rubber against the ongoing procurement operations. This is in addition to 9596 MT of NR procured during 1997-98

Import of Tea from Sri Lanka

624. SHRI PRAFUL GORADIA:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to permit import of tea at concessional duty rates from Sri Lanka;

(b) whether Government are aware of